

WASHINGTON, D.C. - President Obama on Friday authorized the use of \$20.3 million from the Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance Fund to be used for humanitarian assistance in Gaza.

The funds will be directed to U.N. relief agencies and the International Red Cross. The money will assist with food distribution, electricity and water access, medical assistance, and temporary shelter and employment.

On January 27, Congressman Sam Farr (D-Carmel) and 59 of his House colleagues signed a letter to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton requesting that money from the ERMA Fund be released for "reconstruction and humanitarian assistance." The letter also requested the Clinton update Congress on humanitarian efforts with two weeks.

Rep. Farr released the following statement:

"The release of these funds to help alleviate the suffering in Gaza is a clear signal that President Obama is interested in peace over politics.

"Our efforts in the Middle East must shift from placing blame to promoting peace. Tensions are still high in Israel and Gaza, but we can't let that get in the way of our work to create a lasting peace.

"The world is embracing the change that President Obama has brought with him to Washington. I hope we can use that momentum to finally achieve a breakthrough in negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians."

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